Visit of Foreign Minister to Pakistan

2456. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether he visited Islamabad from July, 19 onwards;

(b) if so, the issues discussed with Pakistan during the visit;

(c) the outcome thereof, indicating the Agreements/Memorandum of Understanding signed there; and

(d) the steps taken and being taken by Government in the light thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) to (d) External Affairs Minister visited Pakistan from July 19 to 23,2004 for the SAARC Council of Ministers meeting. On the margins of the SAARC meeting, EAM called on President General Pervez Musharraf, Prime Minister Chaudhry Shujaat Husain, Senior Minister Shaukat Aziz, and Foreign Minister Kasuri of Pakistan. During these meetings, the two sides, *inter alia,* discussed issues related to SAARC, reviewed bilateral relations, and discussed the progress in the process of the Composite Dialogue that began in February 2004. They expressed satisfaction at the wide range of contacts taking place at governmental and non-governmental levels between India and Pakistan. Both sides reiterated the importance of continuing the dialogue in an atmosphere free from violence and to tackling the scourge of terrorism.

Fishermen in Pakistan custody

2457. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the six fishermen employed in the Sultanate of Oman were reported missing and later learnt to have been under the custody of Pakistan Government; and

(b) whether Government have initiated any steps so far for their release from Pakistan, if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.